



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 15, 2023

**House Bill 495
Early Childhood Development – Child Care Scholarship Program – Funding**

House Ways and Means Committee

SUPPORT

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 495. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 495 ensures that, at a minimum, level funding for the Child Care Scholarship Program. It would ensure that the program is never cut to a lesser level than the previous year, thus providing continuity for recipients. Additionally, it guarantees access for the families who are eligible, thus mitigating any possibility of a waitlist from year-to-year.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has supported proposals seeking to “expand assistance to parents with children and improve family formation and stability.” (Letter to Congress on Child Tax Credit, USCCB, 2016). In the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace asserted that all persons deserve “a wage sufficient to maintain a family and allow it to live decently... There can be several different ways to make a family wage a concrete reality. Various forms of important social provisions help to bring it about, for example, family subsidies and other contributions for dependent family members...”

House Bill 495 enhances a program that already provides a tangible way to achieve stability for low-income families throughout the state. Child Care is an essential component to supporting strong, economically secure families and thus the Church supports this bill as a part of its priority interest in alleviating poverty. Enabling parents' continued access to child care services is an imperative part of combating poverty. Often, a barrier to sustainable and full-time employment is the availability and affordability of reliable child care services.

The Conference appreciates your consideration, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 495.